

To the Council:

I have been a resident of Montgomery County and a practicing Emergency Physician in the county for almost 20 years. I would like to express my support \*FOR the plan to begin billing for ambulance transport in Montgomery County.

Over the years I have seen many instances where the public uses and abuses the county EMS system as a free taxi ride to the hospital. Some patients have even told me they called the ambulance with the mistaken belief that their arrival via 911 would allow them to bypass the crowded waiting room. The perception is that if they are not receiving a charge for the service, then it is "free". This has forced the county to continuously increase EMS personnel and equipment in order to provide transport to those who truly need it.

With the budget squeeze that the county is feeling, not billing insurance companies and Medicare for services which they cover is shortsighted and wrong.

I believe that the argument put forward by various rescue squads that people who are in distress will be reluctant to call 911 is ridiculous and underestimates the intelligence of the county population.

Again, I urge you to vote \*FOR to begin charging ambulance fees in Montgomery County.

Sincerely,

Paul D. O'Brien, M.D.